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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 000293

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/16/2019  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [TW](#) [CH](#)  
SUBJECT: FORMER DPP PREMIER SU TSENG-CHANG ON ELECTION  
PROSPECTS, CROSS-STRAIT TIES

Classified By: The Director for reasons 1.4(b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Despite President Ma,s unpopularity, the opposition DPP will have a hard time in December elections holding the offices it now controls, former Premier and DPP party elder Su Tseng-chang told the Director March 13. Su would not confirm whether he will seek the nod for the Taipei county magistrate nomination, but said many are calling on him to run and predicted the DPP would likely choose a party heavyweight as its candidate. On cross-Straits issues, Su criticized the Ma administration for focusing more on what to call an economic agreement with China than on its content. End Summary.

Domestic Politics: DPP Regrouping for December Races  
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¶2. (C) Despite President Ma,s low approval ratings, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) faces a tough challenge in the December local elections, DPP party elder Su Tseng-chang told the Director March 13. Although Taiwan,s difficult economic situation is weighing on the KMT, there is every reason to expect the trial of former President Chen Shui-bian will generate bad publicity for the DPP for years as it works its way through the courts, Su said. A key question will be whether the many voters who believe Chen is guilty will decide that the DPP is also corrupt. Under current circumstances, Su suggested, it will be a challenge for the DPP to retain the six county magistrate and mayoral seats it now holds, let alone make inroads into the 18 seats held by KMT candidates.

¶3. (C) Su would not confirm whether he would seek the DPP nomination for Taipei county magistrate, which he agreed was the key race in the December elections. He admitted he is being pressed by members of the party to stand as a candidate. For now, the DPP will delay identifying a candidate until the KMT puts forward a nominee. Hinting that he might well run, Su noted that, the longer the DPP takes to name a candidate, the more likely the party would nominate someone who, like himself, already enjoyed strong name recognition. He stressed that, if the KMT puts forward incumbent but incompetent Chou His-wei, any DPP candidate would win.8 Su confirmed that former DPP Secretary General Wu Nai-jen is returning to DPP headquarters to help Chairman Tsai Ing-wen with organization and election preparations.

Cross-Straits: Worry about the Content, Not the Name  
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¶4. (C) On cross-Straits relations, Su expressed concern about the pace of rapprochement but, more importantly, that President Ma is not adequately explaining what is under discussion. The name of the economic agreement Taiwan pursues with China is not important, Su stressed. People do not care whether a deal is called an Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) instead of a Closer Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA). What they care about ) and

what the President is not revealing ) is what such an agreement will cover. Until the President does a much better job of explaining what the deal will include, the DPP will continue to oppose it. The timing of the deal is inappropriate, Su added, arguing that seeking to link Taiwan to a slumping Chinese economy made bad policy sense. Finally, he noted, if the EFCA relaxes tariffs on manufacturing and agriculture it will have a severe impact on those sectors of the Taiwan economy.

¶5. (C) Moreover, since there are likely to once again be protests if PRC Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) head Chen Yunlin visits Taiwan in December, Ma needs to learn the lesson from Chen,s last trip. Then, Su said, the KMT put the police in a bad position, using them in a way that guaranteed that they would clash with protesters. Part of the problem, Su admitted, was Tsai Ing-wen,s inexperience organizing and managing DPP protests.

Comment

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¶6. (C) Su may be the most respected member of the DPP today, with other founding members of the party from 1986 either retired, disgraced or -- in the case of President Chen Shui-bian -- in jail. Most pundits, including senior KMT contacts, believe Su will ultimately stand as DPP candidate for populous Taipei county this winter. We've been told if Su were to win big (he was elected twice as Taipei County Magistrate already), he would become the leading candidate to represent the DPP for President in 2012. The risk, of course, is that running and losing could end his political

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career.  
YOUNG